

STAT

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

7 May 1982

Honorable Benjamin S. Rosenthal
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Consumer and Monetary Affairs
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Upon reading George Lardner's May 7, 1982 article "Panel Votes to Bare Arab Investments Report," I was appalled to find that your Subcommittee staff had accused several of my congressional relations officers with attempting to "commandeer" a stenographer who is an employee of the House of Representatives. This most decidedly is not true. Apparently, because your staff does not regularly deal with classified hearings, they did not understand the practices which the Executive Branch and congressional committees have followed for years in protecting the sensitive classified information which appears in transcripts of closed hearings.

As my congressional relations officers told your staff, the customary procedure for dealing with classified stenographic notes from closed hearings is for our Agency Office of Security to provide officers to accompany the stenographic materials from the hearing room to the stenographer's working area where he can convert the materials into a transcript. If the stenographer plans to produce the transcript at a later time, our Security officers store the material in a secure area at CIA Headquarters. Thereafter, at any time when the House stenographer is ready to convert the stenographic materials into a transcript, our Security officers take the material to them. Our officers provide physical security for the classified information, and that is their sole function. We have followed this procedure regularly with the Intelligence, Appropriations, and Foreign Affairs Committees of the Congress and have never run into any difficulty, let alone the type of strident attack your staff engaged in yesterday.

I am particularly concerned about your staff's statement that there was a danger that the stenographer "would have been whisked away," because I do not believe that statement could have been made in good faith. Indeed, the stenographer himself told your staff on the spot that what we were doing was the normal procedure and it matched the regular instructions he had